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7. Develop a water resources management plan for the American River Basin based on a programmatic Record of Decision.

8. Develop a mitigation plan that considers existing needs for mitigation of historical and present CVP impacts to aquatic and terrestrial wildlife and their habitats, then incorporate mitigation actions for new impacts of the American River-related reasonably foreseeable actions.

9. Enter into discussions with the Service to develop an ecosystem-based, programmatic consultation under section 7 of the ESA on the group of American River-related reasonably foreseeable actions.

The Service appreciates the opportunity to participate in the early planning stages of environmental evaluation for the American River Basins. If you have any questions regarding this memorandum or our recommendations, please contact Bart Prose of my staff at (916) 414-6558.

cc: Rob Schroeder, U.S. Bureau of Reclamation
Mike Aceituno, National Marine Fisheries Service
Larry Eng, California Department of Fish and Game
Laura Fujii, U.S. Environmental Protection Agency
Einar Maisch, PCWA

REFERENCE:

USBR (U.S. Bureau of Reclamation). 2001. American River Pump Station Project. Draft environmental impact statement/environmental impact report. Appendix D. Draft American River Basin Cumulative Impact Report. USBR, Central California Area Office, Folsom, CA.

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United States Department of the Interior

FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE
Sacramento Fish and Wildlife Office
2800 Cottage Way, W-2605
Sacramento, California 95825-1846

IN REPLY REFER TO:

December 13, 2001

Memorandum

To: Area Manager, U.S. Bureau of Reclamation
Central California Area Office (Attention: Rod Hall)

From: Acting Field Supervisor, Sacramento Fish and Wildlife Office,
U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service

Subject: Draft Fish and Wildlife Coordination Act Report for the Placer County Water Agency's Pump Station Project, Placer County, California

The Fish and Wildlife Service (Service) has reviewed the *Draft Environmental Impact Statement/Environmental Impact Report (DEIS/EIR) for Placer County Water Agency's American River Pump Station Project*, Placer County, California. This memorandum transmits the Service's Draft Fish and Wildlife Coordination Act Report which was prepared under the authority, and in accordance with the provisions of Section 2(b) of the Fish and Wildlife Coordination Act (48 stat. 401, as amended: 16 U.S. C. 661 et seq.) Comments and recommendations contained in the report regarding our review of the DEIS/EIR also are provided pursuant to the National Environmental Policy Act. The draft report assesses potential project effects on fish and wildlife resources and provides our mitigation recommendations to reduce potential adverse affects to those resources. The Service is providing comments and recommendations regarding the *American River Basin Cumulative Impact Report* to Reclamation in a separate Planning Aid Memorandum. Project effects on federally listed species, pursuant to section 7 of the Endangered Species Act of 1973, as amended, are being addressed separately.

If you have any questions please contact Jill Wright at (916) 414-6600.

Attachment

cc: NMFS, Sacramento, California (Attn: Michael Aceituno)
CDFG, Region II, Sacramento, California
PCWA, Auburn, California (Attn: Einar Maisch)

See Responses to Recommendations at L-244, page 29.

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U. S. Fish and Wildlife Service
Draft Fish and Wildlife Coordination Act Report
for

Placer County Water Agency's Pump Station
Auburn, California

Sacramento Fish and Wildlife Office
United States Fish and Wildlife Service
Sacramento, California

November 2001

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INTRODUCTION

This Fish and Wildlife Coordination Act (FWCA) report evaluates the effects of the alternatives described in the August 2001, draft Environmental Impact Statement/Environmental Impact Report (EIS/EIR) for the Bureau of Reclamation's (Reclamation) proposed Placer County Water Agency's (PCWA)American River Pump Station Project near the town of Auburn in Placer County, California and recommends methods for mitigating losses, preserving and enhancing the affected natural resources. The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's (Service) report has been prepared under the authority, and in accordance with provisions of the FWCA (48 Stat. 401, as amended; 16 U.S.C. 661 et seq.). The FWCA requires Federal water resource development or licensing agencies to consult with the Service and to give equal consideration to the preservation, conservation, and enhancement of fish and wildlife resources with other project purposes.

This FWCA report provides 1) the Service's analyses of impacts to fish and wildlife that would result from construction and operation of the proposed project; 2) recommendations to avoid, minimize, rectify or, as a last resort, compensate for these impacts; and 3) the Service's assessment of project alternatives based on a fish and wildlife conservation perspective.

SERVICE MITIGATION POLICY

Mitigation recommendations contained in this report are based on the Service's Mitigation Policy (Federal Register 46:15, January 23, 1981), which provides guidance for establishing appropriate mitigation for projects under our purview. In addition, the Service has a Regional policy that establishes a goal of no net loss of wetland acreage or value, whichever is greater. Under the Service's Mitigation Policy, resources are divided into four resource categories to ensure that recommended mitigation is consistent with fish and wildlife habitat values effected. How a proposed action affects selected (evaluation) species occupying these habitats is one element of determining what mitigation the Service will seek for the project. The categories cover a range of habitat values from those considered to be unique and irreplaceable to those believed to be much more common and of relatively lesser value to fish and wildlife. Each of the four resource categories has a criteria with specific mitigation goals.

Resource category criteria are:

(1) areas of high value for the evaluation species and are unique and irreplaceable;
(2) areas of high value for the evaluation species which are scarce or becoming scarce regionally;
(3) areas of high to medium value for the evaluation species which are relatively abundant; and
(4) areas with medium to low value for the evaluation species.

The respective resource category mitigation goals are:

(1) no loss of existing habitat value;
(2) no net loss of in-kind habitat value;

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(3) no net loss of habitat value while minimizing loss of in-kind habitat value; and
(4) minimize loss of habitat value.

The Council on Environmental Quality regulations for implementing the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) define mitigation to include: 1) avoiding the impact; 2) minimizing the impact; 3) rectifying the impact; 4) reducing or eliminating the impact over time; and 5) compensating for the impact. The Service's Mitigation Policy uses this same definition of mitigation and considers the specific elements to represent the desirable sequence of steps in the mitigation planning process. Accordingly, we maintain that the best way to mitigate for the adverse biological impacts it to avoid them whenever possible.

BACKGROUND

In the late 1960s, PCWA built a 50 cubic feet per second (cfs) capacity pump station on the North Fork of the American River near the city of Auburn to convey PCWA water supplies to the Auburn Ravine Tunnel (a.k.a. Ophir Tunnel) for delivery to PCWA's service area. However, before PCWA's operations began, the pump station was removed by Reclamation to facilitate construction of Auburn dam in the same area. Construction activities for the dam started in 1967 and included installation of a half mile long tunnel to bypass the river around the construction area (bypass tunnel), construction of a cofferdam to divert the river from the construction site, and excavation for the Auburn Dam foundation.

In 1972, Reclamation entered into a land purchase agreement with PCWA to acquire canyon lands needed for the Auburn dam project. As part of the agreement, PCWA's 50 cfs pump station was removed and Reclamation was obligated to provide a temporary pumping facility to deliver up to 25,000 acre-feet annually (AFA) at a rate of up to 50 cfs into an existing tunnel intake structure at the intake portal of the Auburn Ravine Tunnel when PCWA needed to access its MFP water. Reclamation has been reinstalling a temporary pump each year for PCWA's use and removing it prior to the flood season. PCWA has requested a permanent pump station be constructed with a greater capacity and upgraded conveyance system.

PROJECT DESCRIPTION

Reclamation proposes to construct a new permanent pumping station (and related facilities) for PCWA. The year-round pumping facility would divert water from the North Fork of the American River in the vicinity of the Auburn Dam construction site. The diverted water would be water to which PCWA holds water rights in connection with its Middle Fork American River Project (MFP). When completed, the pump station could divert up to 35, 500 AFA of water from the North Fork of the American River to be delivered to various locations within PCWA's service area.

The proposed project is intended to meet the short- and long-term needs of Placer County and contribute to meeting future water needs for El Dorado County. The diversion facility and

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pumping station will be designed to accommodate additional pumps for PCWA's future expanded diversion amounts and use, and also would include a vacant station for installation of a pump for Georgetown Public Utility District (GDPUD) to divert water from the same location for delivery to areas in El Dorado County (outside of PCWA's service area).

Three alternatives, the No Action/No Project Alternative, and two action alternatives, the Mid-Channel Diversion Alternative, and the Upstream Diversion Alternative are considered in the draft EIS/EIR. All alternatives describe a project of diverting and delivering water from the North Fork American River at the Auburn dam site to the Auburn Ravine Tunnel. Under the No Project Alternative, Reclamation would continue to install and remove the seasonal pumps at the existing location and maintain responsibility for the operation and maintenance of the facilities.[1] PCWA would rely upon the operation of the seasonal pumps to access their MFP water supply; however, PCWA would probably request that Reclamation install the pumps earlier in the year for longer periods of use (April through November) as customer demands increase.

Both action alternatives, the Mid-Channel Diversion and the Upstream Diversion would provide PCWA with a year-round diversion and access to its MFP water supply in the American River Canyon at the Auburn dam site. Both alternatives also would provide the potential for future increased diversion capacity for PCWA as well as GDPUD. Implementation of either alternative would result in the construction and operation of a facility that would provide a year-round water supply to PCWA with an initial pumping capacity of 100 cubic feet per second (cfs) for an annual supply of up to 35,500 AF. The major features that would be constructed for both action alternatives include the water diversion/intake structures, a fish screen and trash rack, water conveyance pipelines, a new pump station placed above the 100 year flood level designed to accommodate future expansion; access roads; power lines; and safety features. After construction there would be a transfer of the pump station project ownership, operation, and maintenance responsibilities, and grant of land rights from Reclamation to PCWA.

The action alternatives differ in the locations of the diversion/intake structures, whether or not the bypass tunnel is closed, implementation of a restoration plan for the existing dewatered segment of the American River channel at the project site, and provisions for increased recreational access facilities in the area. The Mid-Channel Diversion Alternative would locate a new pump station and diversion/intake facility in the dewatered reach of the river channel, close the bypass tunnel, and restore the river channel. The Upstream Diversion Alternative would locate the pump station at the same site as the proposed project, but place the diversion/intake facilities upstream of the bypass tunnel inlet; the bypass tunnel would remain open, and the dewatered river segment would not be restored.

The intake structure for the Upstream Diversion Alternative would be located on the north river bank, about 100 feet upstream of the bypass tunnel inlet. A weir would be constructed upstream of the diversion structure, parallel to river flow for hydraulic gradient control. A seven-foot diameter pipeline would extend about 490 feet between the intake structure and pump station.

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[1]The seasonal pump station facility includes an inlet pipeline that draws water from a small sump pond about 750 feet upstream of the bypass tunnel inlet, four pump canisters (12.5 cfs capacity each), and 2,800 feet of steel pipeline placed above ground from the pump station connected to the Auburn Tunnel portal.

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Locating the diversion upstream of the bypass tunnel would not require channel restoration or tunnel closure. The project would remain closed to the public, except for designated trial use. No additional public access facilities would be developed. The pump station location and associated facilities would be the same as for the proposed project.

The proposed project is the Mid-Channel Diversion Alternative and includes construction and operation of a year-round water pumping facility, closure of the bypass tunnel, and restoration of the three-quarter mile reach of the river that was dewatered and impacted by activities associated with the construction of the foundation for the Auburn Dam. Additional facilities for GDPUD's potential use would be constructed as part of this project to avoid future and further disruption of the project area and riverbed after the river has been restored. The major construction features of proposed project include: 1) construction of a new pump station placed above the 100-year flood level; 2) construction of a water diversion/intake structure; 3) installation of a pipeline casing under the riverbed from the pump station to the east side of the river channel (for future use by GDPUD); 4) installation of a CDFG approved fish screen; 5) excavation of the cofferdam debris in the dewatered reach of the river; 6) closure of the bypass tunnel and restoration of flow to the American River channel; 7) installation of water conveyance pipelines; 8) improvements and construction of access roads for project construction and operation; 9) extension of power supply lines; and 10) construction of public river access sites/safety features and related improvements at the Auburn dam site and near Oregon Bar.

PROJECT AREA

Originating in the Sierra Nevadas, the North and South Forks of the American River join upstream of the city of Auburn; from that confluence, the river flows freely past the city of Auburn in a narrow, deep, and steep sided canyon. Downstream from Tamaroo Bar the river is funneled into the half-mile long bypass tunnel through the area known as the Auburn Dam site (about 500-foot elevation) before entering Folsom Lake.

The geographic scope of the proposed project study area and associated fish and wildlife resources are described in the draft EIS/EIR. In general, the project area encompasses: 1) the project area, 2) PCWA's water service area; 3) the lower American River, and 4) the regional setting.

The project area includes the footprint of the physical facilities of the project features and encompasses all areas where construction, operation, maintenance activities of the proposed project or alternatives would have direct effects on fish and wildlife resources, including the reach of the river between Ralston Afterbay downstream to the Oregon Bar where direct diversion-related effects on the upper American River (changes in river hydrology) would occur.

Habitat types present along the North and Middle Fork of the American River in the project area are described in the DEIS/EIR and include foothill riparian, montane riparian, montane hardwood, montane hardwood-conifer, mixed conifer, blue oak-foothill pine, blue oak woodland, chaparral, and grassland (Mayer and Laudenslayer 1988).